

1988

VILLOTORS

# Harbor residents worry about air's odors

Schoggins noticed his two dead trees after a neighbor in the Bridge Harbor subdivision pointed them out last month.

It was the way the trees looked in his yard — killed only on the eastern side — that was so odd, the three-year Redfish Lane resident said.

About the same time the trees changed color, Schoggins said he and family members started getting "kind of sick," noticing symptoms varying from watery eyes to breathing problems.

"I never have watery eyes," Schoggins said.

Like some other year-round residents along the section of the Intracoastal Canal, he is convinced the two incidents are related to chemical emissions from businesses in his area, only the latest in a series of industrial problems he has faced since moving to Bridge Harbor.

"THE ODORS ARE getting out of hand," he said, noting that the symptoms are an ongoing problem.

"I'm not trying to cause a stink," Schoggins said. "We just want to get this situation corrected."

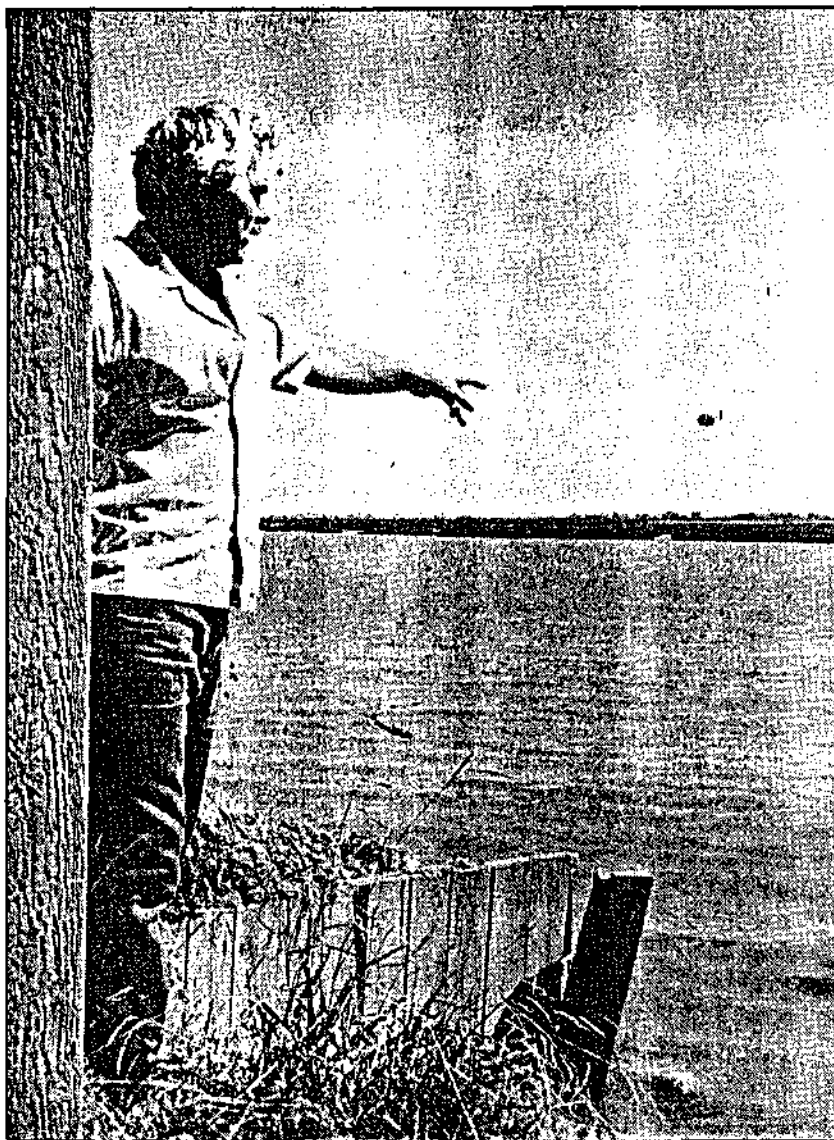
Bob Casale, a real estate broker who has lived on Snapper Lane for seven years, said he and his wife Stella have been fighting the industry even longer.

The latest incident has affected them in the same way as Schoggins, killing some of their trees and causing them to question what exactly it is they are breathing.

"Something deadly came across the air," Casale said. "Where it came from, we don't know."

It is not a first-time experience for Casale, who said he has expended a large amount of energy throughout the years calling local and state agencies, as well as businesses, to voice concerns about the air quality.

SCHOGGINS SAID the odors



Facts photo by JOHN MITCHELL

Bob Casale points out where barges carrying chemicals maneuver through the Freeport Wiggle in the Intracoastal Waterway.

were more noticeable two years ago, and started getting worse again just recently. He added that more people would complain, but only a handful live in Bridge Harbor year-round.

Freeport Health Inspector JoAnn Proctor said she was aware of

concerns and investigated the complaints earlier this week.

Proctor said the visit was the first time she had ever been called to Bridge Harbor as a result of residents' request, adding that area companies consistently pass their health inspections

*"I'm sure their complaints are valid. It is a difficult thing to pin down."*

— Paul Hunt  
Environmental specialist

She said she has never smelled any odors along that stretch of the canal, and concluded the latest incident probably was the result of a chemical cloud from one of the many barges going up and down the waterway.

"I'm sure their complaints are valid," said Paul Hunt, an environmental quality specialist for the Texas Air Control Board. "It is a difficult thing to pin down."

HUNT SAID HE was at the site Tuesday, and has responded to complaints in the past.

"I have not pinpointed a source of any kind," he said. "I observed no odors when I was out there the day."

Like Proctor, he agrees the waterway movement, which is not logged or closely monitored, seems like a valid source.

"You get a lot of barge traffic down there," Hunt said, adding residents were unable to describe the chemical odor, which made it that much more difficult to investigate.

"It's a very subjective type of determination," he said. "There's not really much to do."

Neither Schoggins nor Casale plan to let the matter die easily, though solutions seem limited. Despite their concerns, neither has any intention of leaving the subdivision.

"It's a beautiful place," Casale said, of life on the canal. "We just didn't know the problem's next door."

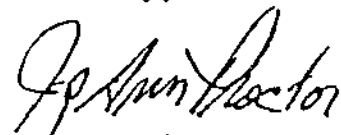
DATE: 10-10-88  
TO: Robby Blair, Meryl Walters and Earl Heath  
FROM: Jo-Ann Proctor  
Re: Nuisance odor at Bridge Harbor

An investigation of Mr. Casale's complaint revealed no odor, no eye irritating fumes and no dead foliage. In investigating Fish Engineering, I discovered the work performed there was heavily regulated and all procedures were well documented. Mr. Tom Randolph, the Fabrication/Marine Manager was very cooperative in showing me the entire dock facility and explaining what type of work took place there. He also explained the precautions taken regarding safety and steps to not inconvenience Mr. Casale. He supplied me with safety reports to read from numerous local, State and Federal agencies. He also gave me a copy of one of their Marine Chemist Certificates (see attached) which is issued prior to work being done on each barge. He explained he had experienced many complaints from Mr. Casale and Fish Engineering had gone to great lengths to alleviate Mr. Casale's fears. When he complained of a bad odor, Fish added a cherry-vanilla fragrance but Mr. Casale continued to complain on the basis of in his opinion, any chemical which had an odor was toxic.

Since Mr. Randolph is well aware of Mr. Casale's presence, it is policy not to open barge tanks which might release obnoxious or toxic fumes when the wind is blowing from the North-East which could possibly carry the fumes over Mr. Casale's property. According to Mr. Randolph's records there had been no tanks opened on the date and time which Mr. Casale was complaining. Furthermore, Jim Mueth of the U.S. Coast Guard/Marine Safety Division, had been present on the Fish Engineering dock from approximately 10:40 AM until 4:00 PM on October 7, 1988 and had not noted any odor. Mr. Randolph did not feel his dock had been the source of any nuisance odors or toxic fumes that date.

Today I received a call from Paul Hunt with the Texas Air Control Board. He will be in my office tomorrow morning. He would like for me to accompany him on an investigation of Mr. Casale's complaint. I would appreciate any further instructions you may have.

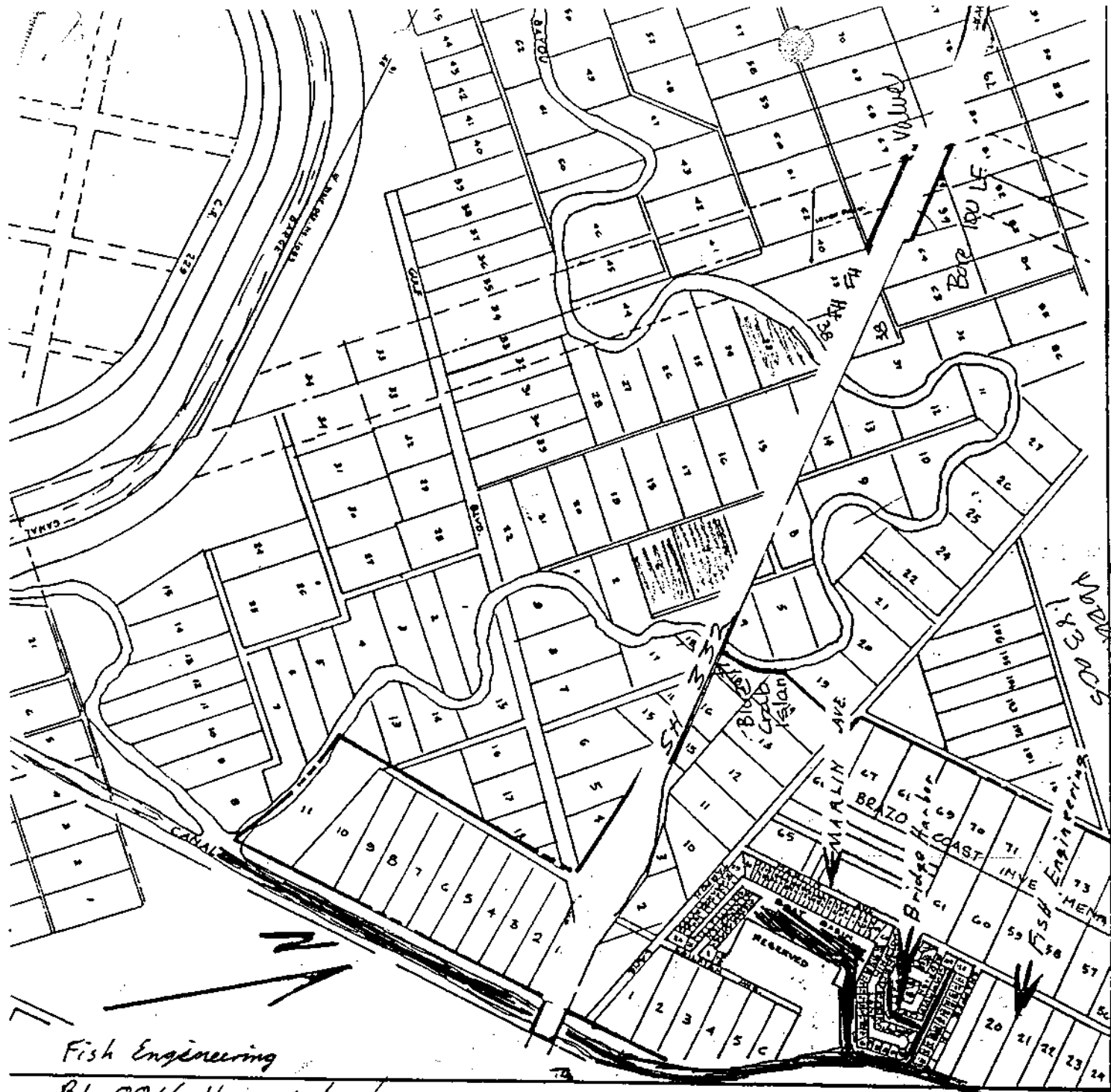
Sincerely,



Jo-Ann Proctor,  
Health Inspector

JAP:saa

T&E 000773



1007-0027-000

Barge Canal  
+ Navigable Waterways

orig Reg 2  
compliance

T&E 000770

☐ VIOLATION☐ VIOLATION FOLLOWUPD  
11/10

- ☒ Add  
☐ Change  
☐ Delete

INVESTIGATION/VIOLATION FORM  
(BOLDFACED ITEMS ARE REQUIRED)DISTRIBUTION:  
Blue - Region/Local Program  
Canary - Data Entry/Region  
Pink - Investigator/Data Entry

Account Number BK 00164 Account Name: Fish Engineering INC  
Date of Investigation (as MMDDYY) 10/1/88 Off Hours (Y or N) ✓  
Investigator Staffcode WPH1 Permit(s): ✓  
1 Primary Investigator Juriscode 070 Other Juriscode 1 ✓ Other Juriscode 2 ✓  
Site Name/Location: 41 County Road 756, Freepert  
Person Contacted/Phone: Tom Randolph 409/233-6371

Investigation Number 334254A Related Previous Investigation Number ✓  
Federal Program (Y or N): NSPS NESHAP Situation Number ✓ (COMPLIANCE DIV. ONLY)

Investigation Type COSV In-House Investigation (Y or N) ✓ \*EPN  
Comment Violation order not confirmed - Complaint  
2 Number 0788 00284

\*\*\* FOR RECORDING REVIEWS OF COMPANY-SUBMITTED REPORTS ONLY \*\*\*  
Date Test Conducted (as MMDDYY) ✓ Date Report Received (as MMDDYY) ✓  
Analysis Review Results (C,N,U) ✓ Permit(s): ✓ Retest Required? ✓

Investigation Number ✓ Related Previous Investigation Number ✓  
Federal Program (Y or N): NSPS NESHAP Situation Number ✓ (COMPLIANCE DIV. ONLY)

3 Investigation Type ✓ In-House Investigation (Y or N) ✓ \*EPN  
Comment ✓

Investigation Number ✓ Local Ordinance (Y or N) ✓  
Violation Number ✓ (CHANGES/DELETES ONLY) Situation Number ✓ (COMPLIANCE DIV. ONLY)  
Cause/Description ✓ (COMPLIANCE DIV. ONLY)  
Rule Violated ✓ Contamcode ✓

## Fill in the Following Applicable Items:

4 Permit Number ✓ Permit Provision ✓  
Board Order Number ✓ Court Order Number ✓ CFR Part ✓  
\*FIN Involved ✓ Facility Name (optional) ✓  
Violation Type ✓ (C=Clerical, N=Non-Clerical, I=Imminent Danger)  
Date NOV Sent (as MMDDYY) ✓  
Date NOV Received (as MMDDYY) ✓ (DEFAULTS TO 5 DAYS AFTER DATE NOV SENT)

Investigation Number ✓ Local Ordinance (Y or N) ✓  
Violation Number ✓ (CHANGES/DELETES ONLY) Situation Number ✓ (COMPLIANCE DIV. ONLY)  
Cause/Description ✓ (COMPLIANCE DIV. ONLY)  
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Date NOV Received (as MMDDYY) ✓ (DEFAULTS TO 5 DAYS AFTER DATE NOV SENT)

\*SEE BACK FOR VALID CODES AND INVESTIGATION TYPE CODES MATRIX

\*EPN REQUIRED FOR INVESTIGATION TYPES INDICATED ON BACK WITH AN \*

\*FIN REQUIRED FOR VOC VIOLATIONS AS INDICATED WITH A + IN THE USER'S MANUAL RULE TABLE

Investigator Signature: Paul Hunt Date: 10/24/88Approved By: Victor L. Newman Date: 11/10/88Screen ID: IV1, IV11, V11 Page 777 of 777 Pages 000777 ACB 93A (12/1/87)

Investigator's Comments  
Fish Engineering, Inc. (FE)  
Freeport, Brazoria County  
Investigation No. 334254A

BL-0016-H  
10/11/88  
Page 4

Subject: Complaint 078800284 was received by the Region 7 office at 10:15 a.m. on October 7, 1988. It was also referred to our office by City of Freeport health inspector Ms. Jo Ann Proctor at 11:00 a.m. the same day. The complaint alleged nuisance odor from the release of chemicals at Fish Engineering, a barge cleaning operation. The release was alleged to have occurred in the early morning hours of October 7 and continued until the time of the report. The complainants alleged that the odors caused difficulty in breathing. Paul Hunt conducted the investigation.

Investigative Findings: I met Ms. Jo Ann Proctor at her office in Freeport on the morning of October 11, 1988, at 9:30 a.m. We discussed the complaint, and what action she had taken. Next, we interviewed the two complainants, surveyed the area for possible odor sources, and interviewed the manager of Fish Engineering. This complaint centers around two small subdivisions on the barge canal in Freeport, Brazoria County. Both subdivisions are accessible from Marlin Avenue near the end of SH 332 at its intersection with the Intracoastal Canal (ICC). Nearest SH 332 is the Bridge Harbor residential subdivision, which is where the complainants live. Adjacent to Bridge Harbor on the east is a commercial subdivision which is the location of the alleged source of odors, Fish Engineering, Inc. (see map attached). The complainants' residences appear to be located approximately 1000 ft. from Fish Engineering.

On the morning the complaints were phoned in, Ms. Proctor interviewed one of the complainants and Mr. Tom Randolph, Manager, Fish Engineering. She did not observe any odor at that time and referred the complaint to our office.

During this investigation I found no nuisance odors and no sources of odors. Both complainants had basically the same story about the effect of the alleged odors. They said that Fish Engineering opens the hatches on barges at night and releases harmful chemical odors to the air. They also said that barges with open hatches come down the canal and cause odors. They alleged that the odors caused eye, ear, nose, throat, and breathing problems. Both complainants showed us damaged trees and shrubs, on the east side of which the leaves were burned. The damage, they said, must have occurred sometime in late August or early September. Both complainants requested that the TACB force Fish Engineering and the barge traffic to keep the hatches closed. Also, they requested that Fish Engineering be permanently restrained from opening barges. I explained that FE had been operating at that location for at least 15 years and that our office had conducted a compliance investigation in May, 1987,

T&E 000774

Investigator's Comments  
Fish Engineering, Inc. (FE)  
Freeport, Brazoria County  
Investigation No. 334254A

BL-0016-H  
10/11/88  
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and the facility was found to be operating in apparent compliance with all rules and regulations. However, since there had been previous complaints, I said I would conduct another compliance investigation.

Ms. Proctor and I surveyed the commercial area east of FE. I found no sources of odors but I did find a residential area on the other side of FE. In this one street subdivision there was evidence that some of the plants had been burned on the west side, indicating that an emission point between the two areas may have caused the damage. The next observation is that FE lies between the two areas of burned foliage. However, there is no evidence that FE had a release which may have caused the damage. An exact date is not known and FE reported no upset conditions during the approximate time period given for the damage.

We met with Mr. Tom Randolph at 1:45 p.m. and discussed the complaint. Mr. Randolph said FE had no releases in recent years. He said that barges do not travel with the hatches open but they do emit some odors because of the vents. FE has been trying to accommodate the complainants for the past 18 months. He said that FE now conducts no barge cleaning operations prior to 8:00 a.m. and is finished by dark. Also, anytime the wind is or might be in a direction which would carry odors towards Bridge Harbor FE will not open a hatch.

I asked Mr. Randolph other questions concerning permits and applicable TACB rules and regulations. FE's compliance status will be addressed through another investigation and "comments".

The results of this investigation have been discussed with the complainants and with Ms. Proctor.

Conclusion: As a result of this investigation into complaint no. 078800284, nuisance odors were not observed. An investigation will be conducted to determine the status of Fish Engineering's compliance with applicable Board rules and regulations.

*Paul Hunt*  
Paul Hunt 11-9-88  
Environmental Quality Specialist  
Region 7

*sdm 11/10/88*

T&E 000775

D e 10/13/88

Time 1045

RR

Person making call John Mitchell Tel. 409/265-741

Organization Brazosport Facts (newspaper) Location Freeport

Person receiving call Paul Hunt Tel. 1

Organization Reg 7 Location Houston

Subject Complaint Investigation #078800284  
Re: ODORS in Bridge Harbor Subd. - Freeport

Summary: Mr. Mitchell asked if I had found  
a source or if I had observed odors  
myself. I had not. Mr. Mitchell  
inquired about the investigative process  
used in this type of investigation and  
Do we Reg 7 ever get to Freeport  
on other investigations & how often.  
He indicated he may not even write  
an article but if he did, he would  
copy to me as I requested.

Paul Hunt

Phone Call to Hal Brooks 10/13/88 1127 am.

Copies to:

T&E 000776